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SETTING THE SIGNALS FOR FULL SPEED AHEAD

RADICAL and revolutionary organization of the railroads of the country will meet the exigencies of war traffic. A huge transportation pool to move both freight and armies is to bring railroading into coordination with the other activities now under Federal direction and domination.

The Railroad War Board today is at the throttle of the country's transportation lines. It has its hand at the lever not through Federal commanding, but through invitation of the roads themselves. Cars, locomotives, tracks, terminals, coal and men, operated as a unit, to secure a maximum of efficiency, represent a decisive and far-reaching impulse toward winning the war.

Methods applied to stabilize and control fuel, grain and food had to decentralize under firm administration the equally important means of their distribution. And this drastic necessity was seen as immediate and imperative, not by stimulating Administration officials, not by red demagogues, but by the railroads themselves in a splendid accession of patriotism which matches their previous cooperation and sacrifice of commercial aims since the United States entered the war.

Transportation is the arterial system of the body military. Efficiency and speed in moving men and munitions to France, and food and supplies here at home to maintain the war work which supports the field forces were impossible under a decentralized system. Individual operation means competition, and this in turn means duplication and waste of mechanical equipment and man-power. Recognition of this menace in the present crisis of car shortage and freight congestion brought quick and unexpected proposals from the railway chiefs to the Railroad War Board. It is Government control without Government ownership. Profiting and dictating, the Government gains all the value and service, yet is freed from the responsibility of operation, and thus escapes the task of effecting a short notice a railroad administration definitely proved talkative and difficult in the fuel and food administrations.

The railroad men have cleared the track for war traffic. They have solved the vital problem of transportation, second to none in supreme moment in wartime. Their proposals are practical, the clear-headed plans of experienced men. Competing passenger service will be canceled, luxury trains dropped from the schedules. Specially available lines will be diverted solely to carrying coal or freight or food. Pooling of rolling stock, trackage and equipment will permit consolidation of shipments of live hulk or classification or destination—an invaluable gain over the competing system. Shipping of non-essentials will be abandoned. Terminals will be used in common, insuring systematic grouping of commodities and vacating enormous quarters for legitimate storage of raw materials and manufactures to wait supervised distribution.

Criticism will be urged that the pooling of railroad resources violates the Sherman anti-trust law. It does, but what of that? Abnormal conditions require extraordinary measures. Statesmen must be as civic-minded to accept as the railroads are courageous to offer the drastic revolutionizing of the country's transportation. Any statute that bars victory must be abrogated under the eminent domain of national welfare. The public must be as willing to co-operate as the railroads are to sacrifice. The people are bound to suffer in curtailment of some conveniences, maybe even of comforts. That is part of their war burden, and they are going to bear it in the spirit of ungrudging and cheerful patriotism.

OSTRACIZING AN ART REBEL

DATRIOTISM may dictate the banning of the great Wagnerian operas from the repertory of the Metropolitan, and consequently from the Philadelphia season which is given by Mr. Gatti-Casazza's successors. But patriotism should be constrained just ordinary common sense is sufficient warrant for omitting Flotow's tinkling and trivial "Martha," if German opera is to go by the board, or rather from the boards. The fact that the libretto is sung in the beautiful language of our Italian ally does not remove the dark curse of the composer's birth in Mecklenburg and his career as court conductor in Schwerin. Why, the very spelling of these words is sinisterly Teutonic even if the composer was not actually a Prussian!

Nor was Wagner a Prussian. He was not even understood by the Berlin critics until long after other music centers had accepted his revolutionary works. Wagner was as great a radical in music as Beethoven was in the theatre. He rent the time-marked fabric of harmonic tradition and operatic convention and spun a new web of fresh and logical patterns. Thus to the arch-rebel the operatic oligarchy has ostracized, while it sanctions Flotow even if the composer was not actually a Prussian!

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